

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT IC

SUBJECT: PEOPLES ALLIANCE CHAIRMAN DISCUSSES CONVENTION RESULTS

REF: REYKJAVIK 1591

1. RAGNAR ARNALDS, CHAIRMAN OF COMMUNIST-DOMINATED PEOPLES ALLIANCE, TOLD EMBOFF NOVEMBER 28 THAT HIS KEYNOTE SPEECH TO PA NATIONAL CONVENTION (REFTEL), IN WHICH HE STRESSED PA'S SOCIALIST/SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS, REFLECTED NO NEW DEPARTURE, BUT WAS RECITATION OF EXISTING PA PHILOSOPHY. HE CLAIMED PA HAD NEVER BEEN TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY, BUT WAS ICELAND'S NEAREST EQUIVALENT OF WESTERN EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. HE SAID, AS HE HAD AT CONVENTION, THAT PA BELIEVES ICELANDIC SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS FADING, AND THAT PA HOPES TO CAPTURE SDP'S SUPPORTERS.

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2. ARNALDS CONFIRMED PUBLISHED REPORTS THAT HE HAD PLANNED TO

QUIT AS CHAIRMAN THIS YEAR BECAUSE, HE SAID, OF OTHER PARTY AND PARLIAMENTARY DUTIES. (HE DID NOT MENTION REPORTS WHICH HAD SAID HE WAS BEING FORCED OUT.) HOWEVER, PARTY HAD BEEN UNABLE TO AGREE ON SUCCESSOR, AND HE AGREED TO ANOTHER TERMS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FACT HE ONLY GOT SOME 70 PER CENT OF VOTES, ALTHOUGH HE WAS ONLY CANDIDATE, INDICATED DISSATISFACTION OVER CHOICE, CHIEFLY AMONG YOUNG, LEFTIST RADICALS.

3. ASKED ABOUT SIGNIFICANCE OF DROPPING OF ICELANDIC FEDERATION OF LABOR VICE PRESIDENT SNORRI JONSSON FROM PA CENTRAL COMMITTEE, ARNALDS SAID THIS WAS "MISTAKE" BUT THAT UNFORTUNATELY JONSSON HAD MADE ENEMIES AMONG PA MODERATES FOR NOT COOPERATING WITH LAST GOVERNMENT AND AMONG LEFTISTS FOR ALLEGED MODERATE VIEWS. DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT, ACCORDING TO ARNALDS, WEAKEN PA'S STANCE AS ICELAND'S MAJOR LABOR ORIENTED PARTY.

4. COMMENT: ARNALDS' DENIAL THAT PA HAS EMBARKED ON NEW IDEOLOGICAL COURSE IS NOT SURPRISING, SINCE ALTERNATIVE COULD SUGGEST REPUDIATION OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND BE FRAUGHT WITH GRAVE DANGERS FOR PARTY. HOWEVER, IT EMERGES FROM CONVERSATION EVEN MORE CLEARLY THAN BEFORE THAT PA SEES POTENTIAL FOR MAJOR GAINS AT EXPENSE OF WHAT IT SEES AS FADING SDP, AND PA MAY TRIM ITS SAILS ACCORDINGLY. ARNALDS'S COMMENTS ABOUT INTERNAL PARTY AFFAIRS, I.E., DISAGREEMENT OVER LEADERSHIP AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE ELECTION, WERE PROBABLY LESS THAN FULL STORY, BUT THEY ARE INTERESTING AS FIRST-HAND INSIGHT INTO MATTERS THAT PA PRESS AND OFFICIALS DO NOT MENTION PUBLICLY.

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